

# Nature Notes

## Milkweed Beetles

by Wanda Smith

**A**t the May LTNS campout a group of us was exploring Big Meadow when Charles Peterson brought to our attention a bright red beetle flying from milkweed to milkweed. Connie Blakley and I took off after it with cameras in hand, but it wasn't the easiest subject to capture digitally. Nevertheless, we were able to get good enough photos to make an ID: *Tetraopes texanus*. The *Tetraopes* name is derived from Greek *tetra* (four), plus *opes* (eyes), which refers to their compound eyes bisected by the bases of the antennae. The common name for this genus is Milkweed Longhorns.

**F**ourteen species of *Tetraopes* are found in the U.S. and Mexico, and each species is typically associated with one species of *Asclepias* (milkweed) although some sources indicate that they may use two or more milkweed species, so additional research is needed. Milkweed beetles and their larvae are reportedly toxic, the red-and-black coloration advertising their toxicity. This adaptation is known as aposematism, which is a warning for would-be predators to stay away; aposematism isn't limited to coloration and includes emitting odors and sounds.



Compound eye structure of *Tetraopes* sp. [©Bruce Marlin, [www.cirrusimage.com](http://www.cirrusimage.com)].

**T***etraopes texanus* is primarily associated with *Asclepias viridiflora* (Green Comet Milkweed) which is known to occur in the sanctuary but our beetle kept landing on *Asclepias viridus* (Green Milkweed, or Antelope Horns). The most similar-looking beetle to the one we found is *T. femoratus*, or Red-



*Tetraopes texanus* found on Big Meadow [©Wanda Smith].

femured Milkweed Beetle; however, it lacks the long setae (bristles) at the apex of most of the antennomeres (segments of an antennae-type that has basically uniform segments) of *T. texanus* and it is associated with a type of milkweed not found at LTNS. The detail of the antenna is shown in the photo by entomologist Mike Quinn, [www.TexasEnto.net](http://www.TexasEnto.net).



**G**enerally, the larvae of *Tetraopes* feed on milkweed roots during fall and winter, pupate in spring, and emerge in mid- to late summer, although with our warm Texas winters this individual's pupation and emergence obviously occurred earlier. As adults, the beetles feed on the *Asclepias* leaves.

**T***etraopes texanus* is only one of the beautiful insects that can be seen at the LTNS. Please join us at the next Visitors' Weekend and see for yourself the diversity of our beautiful sanctuary.

# Group Activities

See websites for additional details ([www.outdoornatureclub.org](http://www.outdoornatureclub.org) or [www.ornithologygroup.org](http://www.ornithologygroup.org))

## ONC Contacts

### ONC General Information

Sergio Henao, 713-729-2385

### Botany/Entomology Group

See our website

### Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Aaron Stoley, 713-781-1372

### Ornithology Group (OG)

Marcy Brown, 713-664-5206

## Meeting Place, Bayland Community Center

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at Bayland Community Center, 5400 Bissonnet at Hillcroft (see map)



## Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Events

All LTNS events are held at the sanctuary, 2001 FM 945, Cleveland, TX (see map)



### September 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

### October 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

### 12 Ornithology (OG) Meeting

6:30 pm—Learning Corner

7:00 pm—Program

*Birding in Idaho*, by Steve Gross

### 13 Botany-Entomology, 7:30 pm

*Defining Terms Used in Identifying Members of the Asteraceae Family, With a Focus on Identifying Some Yellow Composites and Liatris*, with Dr. Larry Brown. Please bring your loupes; Dr. Brown will be bringing plants for analysis.



## LTNS ACTIVITIES

### 17 LTNS Adopt-A-Highway, 8:30 am

Volunteers help pick up trash along our adopted section of FM945 adjacent to LTNS. Bring hat, gloves, water; trash bags provided by the state.

### 17 LTNS Dally Days, Lepidoptera, 10:00 am

Join us for our first Dally Days program. See details next page.

### 3 Ornithology (OG) Meeting

6:30 pm—Learning Corner

7:00 pm—Program

*Gardening For Birds*, by Glenn Olson

### 11 Botany-Entomology, 7:30 pm

Watch our website for program details.

### 13 ONC Board Meeting, 7:00 pm

All members are welcome at board meetings



## LTNS ACTIVITIES

### 22 LTNS Dally Days & Halloween Weekend Bugs & Spiders, 10:00 am

Apropos to our Halloween celebration, we will study bugs & spiders. Details next page.

### 22 Pumpkin Carving Contest

Bring a pumpkin; let you inner artist shine with your design. Winners get bragging rights!

## Dally Days — A New Concept at LTNS

Get away from the city; come to the Little Thicket and “dally” with nature; learn, lunch, and socialize. This year each visitors weekend will have a theme and we will focus on a particular aspect of nature. Watch the newsletter and the web site for more details about Dally Days at LTNS.

# Other Notes of Interest

(Submit news and articles to editor – see back page for contact info)

## ONC Appreciates Your Donations

Donations to ONC are always appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. Thanks, everyone, for your generosity.

### *In memory of Jane Dodge*

*Leland Day*

*Dean Duryea & Frank Smith*

*Doug Duryea & Ellen Moore*

*Tony/Peggy Duryea*

*Gwen Kunz*

*Elena Parmesan*

*Charles/Wanda Smith*

*Aaron/Karen Stoley*

*Catherine Whiteside*

## ONC Adopts Revised Meeting Schedule

At ONC's annual planning meeting in June, members elected to limit the ONC general member meetings to twice per year as required by our Bylaws. The General Business meeting and election of officers will be held in March. We will also have a year-end meeting and potluck supper in May. This year-end meeting is a carryover from the "old days" when ONC always had a dinner meeting as its last meeting of the year. Details for these meetings will be published in *Nature Notes* and on our web site.

In lieu of ONC meetings, there are special study group meetings held monthly by the Ornithology and Botany/Entomology groups. These groups have planned programs covering a variety of topics, and we encourage our members to attend those meetings.

Also in lieu of ONC meetings, we are implementing a series of study programs at the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary during regularly scheduled Visitors Weekends. Subjects will cover a wide array of nature topics and will include in-the-field, hands-on study while walking the trails of LTNS. The full schedule is published in our Member Directory, which you should have received by now, and also on our web site. Watch for more details in each issue of *Nature Notes* and make plans to join us at LTNS for **Daily Days!**

## Notes from Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary



### September 17 **Daily Days**

**TIME:** 10:00 am **BRING:** Lunch, water, etc.

#### **Moderate walking on well-groomed trails.**

Join Connie Blakley and Wanda Smith for a day of lepidoptera study. Meet in the building at The Cove at 10:00 am. We will spend about an hour learning and discussing the characteristics of the order Lepidoptera, which comprises both moth and butterfly families. After lunch, we will walk to the nearest meadows in search of butterflies and day-flying moths to learn simple ID techniques. As the sun sets, we will set up a moth sheet and black lights to study and photograph moths and other insects. Contact Connie or Wanda with questions.



### October 22 **Daily Days**

**TIME:** 10:00 am **BRING:** Lunch, water, etc.

#### **Moderate walking on well-groomed trails.**

Join us for the day to study insects at the sanctuary. Meet in the building at The Cove at 10:00 am. There will be a short introductory session, followed by walking the trails in search of insects. Beetles and spiders should be easy to find in the fall at LTNS. Contact organizers, Calvin & Connie Blakley, for additional information.



### October 22 — **Halloween Activities**

**TIME:** 4:00 pm **BRING:** Pumpkin, costume!

Our annual Halloween celebration at LTNS begins in the afternoon. Bring a costume and carve a pumpkin. Trick-or-Treat around the campfire. Share your favorite ghost stories. Most importantly, plan to **HAVE FUN!**





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**Officers and Board of Directors**

President .....Sergio Henao  
 Executive Vice President ..... vacant  
 Membership Vice President.....Margret Simmons  
 Sanctuaries Vice President (acting)..... Aaron Stoley  
 Secretary..... Andrew Beck  
 Treasurer .....Mike Correll  
 Custodian .....Russell Jeffords  
 Botany•Entomology Representative ..... Leland Day  
 Ornithology Representative ..... Marcy Brown

**our charter...**

*A nonprofit educational and scientific organization established in 1923 to protect and conserve natural resources by fostering an interest in nature study.*

**our sanctuary...**

*ONC owns a 700-acre nature preserve, Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary (LTNS), 11 miles northwest of Cleveland, TX. All members and guests are invited to attend monthly open houses.*

**President's Farewell**

*by Calvin Blakley*

At the August board meeting the board acknowledged my resignation as acting President and appointed Sergio Henao to fill the vacancy until the next election in March 2013.

I've been honored to serve as President all these years but I felt new leadership was long overdue, and I am happy that Sergio accepted the task.

I have recruited several new officers who bring fresh thinking. Miquel Correll is filling the Treasurer vacancy left by retiring Farrar Stockton, Sheryl Maruca fills the long vacant Conservation Vice-President position, and Phyllis Thompson has accepted the long vacant Publicity chair. In addition Karen Terrell is taking on the Memorials chair from retiring Gwen Kunz. These new officers responded to my appeals to the membership for help and I would like to thank them for assuming these roles. Another new board member, Andrew Beck, was elected Secretary at the March general business meeting, filling the post vacated by Flo Hannah.

I want to thank Farrar, Gwen, and Flo for their years of service. Like all volunteers in nonprofit organizations they didn't have to serve, but they did and they made my job as President easier. We still have one vacancy on the board, Executive Vice-President, whose principal task is to chair the quarterly board meetings and thus is a great position from which to learn the workings of the corporation. I hope one of our members will step forward and volunteer to fill this position.

**Editor's note:**

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Calvin for his 15 years of service as ONC's president and to enumerate a few of his many accomplishments to ensure that ONC remains a strong and viable organization.

- Proposed a change to the constitution to stagger election of officers, thus ensuring continuance on the board — adopted in 2003.
- Strengthened financial support for LTNS by implementing ongoing methods to fund the Permanent Sanctuary Endowment Fund.
- Worked annually with Bayland Community Center to secure meeting space for regular and board meetings.
- Created, and continues to maintain, ONC's web site.
- Filed annual reports with the IRS to prevent ONC from losing its 501(c)(3) status.

The list goes on, but you get the picture. Oh, and he never missed a meeting in 15 years — an impressive attendance record! Thanks, Calvin, for devoting 15 years to ONC.